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> What is a primitive? By what signs is he recognized? Historians traditionally regard as primitive prehistoric peoples, the savage populations of the various continents, and also the ancient civilizations antedating the history of the various peoples (Greeks, Romans, Arabs, etc.)
>
> Ethnologists have recently attempted to introduce certain distinctions into this confusion. They have evaluated the degree of primitiveness of various primitive peoples... by tracing every known cycle of civilization geographically through space and historically through time. (Cf. Ecclesia, Encyclopédie populaire des connaissances religieuses /Ecclesia, Popular Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge/, pp. 725 and 726.)

173 Banyarwanda. The arrrival of the Hamites, or Batutsi, in the area and the influence they exercised there, especially when they entered the central province of Nduga under Mibambge-Mutabazi, twenty-third in the dynasty, transformed Ruanda and its autochthonous inhabitants in more ways than one. The conquerors contributed a great deal to the development of the legends and traditions.

173 ● 814 A great part of what we have to say about Ruanda was related to us by the official historians, abachurabgenge ("knowledge makers"), appointed to the court. From times immemorial, those men have been in charge of preserving the memory of the Hamitic princes' deeds and actions. /74/

They record the genealogy of kings, their birth name and reigning name. They do not overlook the queen-mother's name and that of her clan of origin. They are always at the monarch's beck and call, attend upon him in shifts two by two, and beguile his leisure with the narration of his ancestral lineage and of the exploits that adorn it. It must be admitted that this purely oral tradition is liable to a serious shortcoming, forgetfulness and resulting distortion. Time, that wears away everything, eventually obliterates certain facts and even the names of people whose existence is lost in the mists of time and who are replaced with legends and myths. This is the impression made by the tales of the chroniclers concerning the first sovereigns of the Mututsi /Batutsi/ dynasty. The first nine or ten kings seem to have been invented out of whole cloth, Their genealogy seems to have been created as an afterthought in order to flatter the pride of princes, who are enraptured at the thought of being descended from a long line of ancestors with some demigods among them.

These legends, nevertheless, do not lack interest. They disclose native ideas about the creation of the world, the existence of good and evil, the origin of death, etc.

Moreover, the historical outline is revealed in spite of everything and makes it possible for us to divine the political state of affairs in Ruanda at the time of the Batutsi arrival.

Whence did the Hamites come? No one knows exactly. It is likely that they came from the Nkole, which is now part of the Protectorate of Uganda. It is generally agreed that they emerged from the Ndorwa through the northeast and that they stayed for a while at the place called Mutara, which is often mentioned in narratives and legends.

While some of them settled more or less definitively in the Ndorwa region and its immediate surroundings, others continued their journey and successively established the kingdoms of Ruanda, Gissaka, /75/ Burundi, and Uha (1). The first stopping places and first conquests

1. The eight small kingdoms located in the territory of the Bahaya (shore dwellers of lake

644 The observers add that most of those weapons and objects were once
778 the personal property of vanquished princes and kings, hence their value in the eyes of the victors.

The Hamitic monarchs have also preserved carefully the skulls of beeves whose sacrifice was established as favorable, and the gourds containing the gall bladder (igisabo), the swollen parts of the large intestine (ishira), and certain other parts (ibiranga) of the immolated animals. Those hermetically sealed gourds make highly effective talismans.

534 The names of the main drums are as follows:
552 Kalinga, the palladium-drum.
644 Chyimamugezi, former palladium-drum of King Gihanga.
778 Nyamigezi, the palladium-drum of Yuhi-Mazimpaka.
Butare ("strong as a rock").
Gissabarwanda ("which reverberates throughout the land").
Sinkangimilyango, "I do not inspire fear into the (local) clans."
Mpatsibihugu, "I went to the defense of the land."
Kiragutse, "It spreads out" (that is to say, "It is of enormous size").

Ndamutsa, "I salute him (the king)," from the verb kulamutsa,
[202]/374/ "to salute," because it is pounded in the morning around nine o'clock, when the king appears before his subjects to hear their good wishes and listen to their grievances. It was also used to herald executions of the convicted, a spectacle which formerly drew the interest of most of the court.

533 5. The official drummers are chosen, like the afore-mentioned
644 keepers, from the Abiru clan. They play on the Ndamutsa drum,
[614] hence their title of Abalamutsa. They live in the hut consecrated to the late King Lwabugiri (he died in 1895). That is where the ordinary drums are kept, those that are struck from four o'clock in the morning onward, in accordance with an immemorial custom.

644 6. The court chroniclers, or annalists. Their professional
● 814 name is Abachurabgenge, "knowledge makers." They form a sort of closed clan whose members alternate by the king's side and acquaint him with the history of the land and the deeds and actions of his

644 forebears. Along with thedeeds of the past, they must preserve the
● 814 memory of each king's name, the names of the queen mother, of the king's immediate ancestors, and of the tribe to which they belonged.

Needless to say, critical sense has not yet appeared in the land. It happens sometimes that the Court historians and keepers of the traditions disagree about some detail which is now forgotten or
[787] in dispute. In such cases divinatory sacrifices are offered in order to find out what the king should be told (1).

1. See "Founding of the Hamitic Kingdom of Ruanda" /Book II, not translated/ for opinions regarding the authenticity of the first /few/ sovereigns. As fas as the beginnings of the kingdom are concerned, the traditional documentation is of greater value to ethnology than to history.

In spite of their inherent faults and imperfections, the epics nevertheless are not lacking in interest or charm. Through them we can grasp at first hand the thoughts of the Banyarwanda, their feelings, their /375/ ideas about life, their love of their native soil, their attachment to old customs and memories of the past. They reveal the pathetic sorrow caused by foreign invasions, and the enthusiasm inspired by eventual triumph.

[64] 7. The keepers of the traditions belong to the important Abiru clan. Their role is to preserve the unity and continuity of customs at the capital and throughout the realm. The supreme chief of this corporation is the chief of the Batsobe, whose position entails numerous and varied functions.

644 In accordance with a popular tradition, he is personally en-
643 trusted with the task of collecting the umbilical cord (umukungwa) of
787 each of the king's sons, as well as their teeth, including their milk teeth. Then, when the time comes to determine the heir to the throne, it is this personage who has the honor of presiding over the selection.

surprising that they should be shocked and amused by the lingo of the mountain dwellers and those who inhabit the frontiers of the realm. The latter's language is far from refined. It teems with syntactical and accentual mistakes and contains a mixture of foreign terms borrowed from the tongues of neighboring groups.

More conversant than others with matters of language, the men at court readily argue about the worth or etymology of existing words, and willingly create others which are more adequate by drawing upon the genius of their language.

The plural word imiduha means "cactus." Its literal meaning is "those (plants) that give to us." Since those kinds of plants, which resemble the Abyssinian quelqual or kwelkol, are not of any productiveness to the Banyarwanda, the men of letters propose, at least theoretically, to replace the word with imyiha or ichyiha, both of which are purely conventional nouns devoid of this misleading connotation.

It is in the same spirit that the black academicians wish to substitute the word ikyiyone, that is to say, "large bird" for the usual term igikona, whose literal meaning is "that which ravages" (the crops). Our African "Immortals" /Tr.: term applied to members of Académie Française/ would also like to see the term umuguta used exclusively to designate a skeleton (or dried-up cadaver), and its synonym umwite reserved for the word "skin."

In their superstitious fear the Blacks avoid pronouncing the names of persons, animals, and things of which they are afraid. They are motivated by the spirit expressed in the French proverb:

Quand on parle du loup, il sort du bois /Talk of the wolf and he will come out of the woods, i.e., speak of the devil and he will appear./ /455/

Instead of calling the leopard by his real name, ingwe, the cowherds, shepherds, travelers, and all other persons who frequent the areas haunted by those animals use the following expressions:

"The one whose name is kept unsaid," Nyiramahole.

"The wind (fast as the wind)," Muyaga.

"The claw of claws," Rwara.

"The animal with the spotted coat," Bugondo.

"The voracious one," Kimizi.